

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with John Cunningham

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-008

John Cunningham, Kane County, Illinois Clerk during the COVID-19 pandemic, and election of 2020, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview Date & Location:

Date: Mar 17, 2021 Location: Kane County, Illinois Clerk's Office, Geneva, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:20 / 1.33 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on June 22, 2021.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

John Cunningham, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-008

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: John Cunningham was born in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin in 1939, and grew up in Aurora, Illinois, graduating from East Aurora High School in 1957. While in high school, he was class president and president of the Latin Club. John earned a BA degree from Chicago State University, majoring in political science, MA from Governor's State University where he majored in business and public service, and Juris Doctorate from Northern Illinois University and Lewis College of Law in 1978. John's work experiences include working as the Commissioner of Public Property in Aurora from 1965-1973, at Cunningham Reality from 1971-78 and then at Cunningham and Associates. He served as Chairman of the Board and President of the Valley Banks of Seneca, Ransom, and Verona, Illinois from 1997-2001. Since 2002, John has served as the Kane County Clerk, and has been President of the National Association of Clerks, Records, Election Officials, and Treasurers (NACRC).

Cunningham discussed how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the office of the Kane County Clerk. This office is responsible for holding elections, handling birth, death, marriage, and civil union documents, being part of the property tax cycle, and collecting economic statement of interest and business registrations. The Kane County Clerk's office maintained in person services through appointments from the period of March 2020 to March 2021. He reviewed the changes made for holding elections in 2020 and the spring of 2021. The county did a massive increase in mail-in voting. He oversaw the hiring and training of election judges, and the purchase of new equipment to handle the volume of mail-in votes. In addition, Cunningham discusses the safety precautions taken for early and same day voting at the voting sites, manning a 'War Room' for answering voter questions, and the process for tabulating the results. In the November 2020 election 84,871 votes were mail-in, 104,095 were from early voting, and 45,757 were in-person day voting. In November 2020 73.7% of registered voters voted. Vote by mail and early voting both dramatically increased from the 2016 election. Cunningham concludes with some personal recommendations for implementing best voting practices.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Kane County, Illinois; 2020 voting in Kane County, Illinois; duties of a county clerk in Illinois; impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Kane County Clerk's Office; mail-in voting in 2020 election; early voting in 2020 election; training of election judges; election equipment for 2020 election; CARES Act and elections; election best practices

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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